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From Gaza to Grassy Narrows

By Jeremy East

The Harper government is finally talking about land rights. They're even advocating the sovereignty of a people who occupied their land thousands of years ago. Unfortunately, they had to look outside the country to do so.

As of press time, the conflict in Gaza has claimed over 1,360 Palestinian lives, the vast majority of which are believed to have been civilians. An attack on a school in the Jebaliya refugee camp in late July marked the second attack on a United Nations compound by Israeli forces in one week.

The one-sided nature of the battle for the West Bank has become increasingly clear, placing Western support of Israel under strain. But unflinchingly, federal Conservatives have stood behind their allies in the Middle East, dutifully trumpeting Israel's right to defend itself.

Regardless of the criticism this conflict has received, Tories aren't wrong to advocate for the rights of the Jewish people in Israel. Recognition of their unique ties to the land they inhabit is a necessary part of achieving peace between Palestine and Israel. But it's a severe disappointment that Harper has more concern for the indigenous rights of Israelis than he does for those in his own backyard.

On July 30, a group of five Ontario chiefs gathered in Toronto to deliver a message to their provincial and federal governments, that they are prepared to lay down their lives if necessary to defend their land from unwanted resource development.

Among them was Grassy Narrows Chief Roger Fobister, whose community has been ravaged by the effects of mercury poisoning after 10 tonnes of the toxic element was dumped into the river

his people had fished for centuries. Today, clear-cut logging in the region has brought on the threat of further mercury contamination in local waterways.

"He needs to have the same principles that he's saying about Israel lands to Treaty 3 territory and Native lands in Canada," Treaty #3 Grand Chief Warren White said at the event. "Clean up your own backyard before you go and spill a lot of money into disasters in other countries."

In early July, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld the Ontario government's power to permit industrial logging on Grassy Narrows First Nation's traditional lands. Grassy Narrows had hoped that Ottawa would have the power to reverse that decision, but the Harper government has remained silent.

Earlier this summer, uranium mining made its exit from Eeyou Istchee. Undoubtedly, radioactive production would be in full swing here had the Crees not met the threat with unanimous opposition. For years, these Ontario nations have tried to voice similar concerns against resource development. Their message in Toronto is proof that until now, those concerns have fallen on deaf ears.

Three civilian deaths in Israel were enough to convince our government to support a military attack involving ground forces, artillery and more. Yet a community here in which 60% of the population has been severely affected by easily preventable mercury poisoning seems to raise little federal concern.

At home and abroad, true progress is made when all parties are brought to the table. The situation in Grassy Narrows makes it clear that Ontario's First Nations have not been invited to the conversation.

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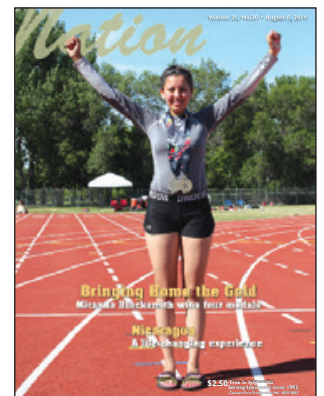
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Eeyou Istchee's big winner
Miranda Blacksmith



Free-range slaughter

by Sonny Orr

Recently, a young Inuk woman started plucking her gift from home, a goose, on a train in Montreal's métro. This was recorded on a cellphone and uploaded to the Internet. It went viral for all the wrong reasons.

Eventually, the young woman came forth to explain that she's an Inuk simply practicing her traditional food preparation. This story riled me as I remember the days spent in the south, months on end without real food that didn't come in a package.

Kraft dinners and cheap hams, day-old bread and 10 pounds of mayo with nickel pickles and sardines. That was the fare back in the day when monthly rations of funds went to the rent and left little for food. This is the common situation for many people from the north who crave for foods rich in nutrients that are also culturally and palate satisfying. Kudos to her, I say.

Other unfortunate students studying in southern cities would often salivate at the sight of the Canada goose, just walking within reach of hungry hands. One time, at the end of the month and payday still a week away, students called each other to see what was left in their pantry. One had some breadcrumbs, one had an onion, what to do?

Desperate, one young lad snuck up to sleeping geese in the park and coaxed them with some of the crumbs, a few calls and snatched an unsuspecting goose! He quickly killed it and hurried back to the others. They had enough for a stuffed goose! Another

hungry student showed up with carrots and a feast was under way.

Seeing such abundance of food hanging around in an area where they are considered pests may be an answer to a problem for many people. Harvesting the pests and allowing the people from the north to process those geese for food may work for those in need of such solutions. Something to mull over, I guess. I just hope that the southern population doesn't discover how good they taste.

I guess the young Inuk and her spectators may be on to something. What if the métro became a showcase for all kinds of food preparation techniques from around the world? I guess the population may become more aware of how their chickens are processed, or how long it takes to kill a pig or even lay an egg. The world of food does not start from a package! It comes from the land around the area and even from other lands from around the world! But does spreading peanut butter on a jam sandwich while traveling to work or school or wherever on the métro deserve the same coverage as a goose being plucked?

Perhaps authorities should stop food from being exposed in public areas. Maybe the world will be a better place? Naaah! Who cares, as long as someone enjoys the food. It should remain what it is – food. Not some orgiastic display of bloodletting that the public always wanted, but something that any good woman from the north would know right off the bat, it's better when it's cooked over a fire.

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Poisoning the fish

Grassy Narrows demands apology for mercury dumping

By Joel Barde

From 1962-1970, a paper mill upstream of the Grassy Narrows First Nation – an Ojibwa community located 80 km north of Kenora, Ontario – deposited some 10 tonnes of mercury into the river that they had fished in for centuries.

Chief Roger Fobister and other community members held talks and protests in Toronto on July 28 to press the federal and Ontario governments to apologize for allowing the dumping to take place and commit to cleaning out the affected river system.

Hundreds of supporters paraded through the streets of Toronto to deliver their demands to Queens Park. The group carried long yarns of blue fabric, fish cut-outs and banners.

Chief Fobister says he is frustrated with both the provincial and federal governments, saying they “look the other way” when companies pollute remote First Nation communities like his.

“An apology would be quite significant in knowing the government is sorry about what it allowed to take place,” said Fobister.

Fobister would also like to see changes to the way that people are diagnosed with mercury poisoning. He points to a 2010 study by the Mercury Disability Board, an organization that was set up by the Grassy Narrows First Nation following an earlier settlement. The report says that many of the procedures that are being used to diagnose mercury poisoning amongst the Grassy Narrows residents are outdated. The report draws from the work of a team of Japanese researchers who studied the impact of the pollution on the community for over 30 years and concluded that the number of people affected is far higher than those who are currently receiving compensation.

“Many of the health complaints from the affected population have not been properly diagnosed and documented,” says the report. “There should have been extensive examinations and follow-up of these communities from [the 1970s] forward, and assistance with respect to health and nutrition.”

Fobister is also calling on the government to end logging practices in traditional Grassy Narrows territory. He says that companies have moved to clear cutting rather than selective logging techniques, and that this is causing natural occurring mercury to flow down hills into the river system.



Right to Left: Judy Da Silva - Grassy Narrows Mother of 5, Grassroots mercury justice activist, Stan Beardy - Ontario Regional Chief, Roger Fobister Sr. - Grassy Narrows Chief

“We’re saying that based on our evidence, clear cutting will release more mercury into our waterways and this will poison us. It just compounds the problem,” said Fobister.

Judy Da Silva is a mother of five who lives and grew up on the Grassy Narrows reserve. She receives compensation – around \$250 a month. She says that given the fact that all of her nation are impacted by mercury dumping, they should all be compensated.

Mercury poisoning can cause loss of balance, memory and sensation in fingertips – all issues Da Silva has experienced. “But the thing with mercury,” she said, “is it starts eating away at the brain and has other effects, like heart disease, and even diabetes.”

Da Silva, a day-care administrator, draws a connection between mercury poisoning and child development. Out of 44 children in the community’s system, 12 are special needs, a high number she attributes to the lasting effects of the pollution.

Da Silva also laments is the loss of culture that has resulted from the pollution. Fish, she says, is sacred to the Ojibway. And given the high rates of mercury, she only allows her children to eat it on special occasions.

“I tell them the fish is poisoned. I tell them to just eat a little bit of it when they do. We now get to eat fish once or twice a year. It’s too tainted.”

On July 29, Ontario Aboriginal Affairs Minister David Zimmer announced that he will visit Grassy Narrows on Aug. 6 to assess the situation.



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Diamond dreams realized

Cree companies increase presence in Quebec's first diamond mine

By Amy German

As Quebec's first diamond mine gears up for operation, two Mistissini Cree companies are preparing for the roles that they will play in its labour force thanks to the priority orders laid out in the 2012 Mecheshoo Agreement.

The agreement signed between the Grand Council of the Crees, the Cree Nation of Mistissini and Stornoway Diamonds provided for employment and business opportunities as well as training and education initiatives. The Swallow families, whose traplines the mine is built on, are supplying labour and contracts to build and support what will one day be among the world's largest diamond producers.

According to Stornoway Vice-President of Public Affairs, Ghislain Poirier, the family's history with the mine goes back to 2001, when they first met with the Swallows and Mistissini to discuss the development of a diamond mine. Poirier said that he still cherishes memory of that meeting and the feast that followed.

"During the following years we tried to incorporate members of the family into our workforce. This was one of our first priorities in the exploration phase. There were seasonal activities at this time and so many members of this family were on our workforce," said Poirier.

This was a step-by-step process, however. It was necessary to work with the community and the family to ensure that the project was not only done in accordance with Cree values but that the people of Mistissini would benefit.

Poirier said that these efforts intensified in 2011 during Stornoway's environmental impact study through an Experimental Exchange Group. Poirier said that they sat with the community every six weeks to explain where the project was at and see what their thoughts were. The company met with 30-60 members of the community each time.

"We were able to receive their comments and this was a real exchange of information. With that information we adapted our project, moved several things and changed our layout – all because the comments

and concerns of the family and the community were taken into consideration by Stornoway," said Poirier.

Poirier said the Mecheshoo Agreement contains a special priority order for job opportunities for the Swallow family. The company has to first consider applications for job postings from the family, a Cree from Mistissini or a Cree from elsewhere with similar qualifications.

According to Poirier, this is a major advantage for the family as if they were to have two bids with similar competitive prices; Stornoway would give prefer-

"THE CREES ARE OUR PRIORITY WHEN IT COMES TO EMPLOYMENT. WE WANT TO BETTER THE EMPLOYMENT RATES IN OUR COMMUNITY AND SO FAR IT HAS REALLY BEEN GOING GOOD."

SIDNEY SWALLOW

ence to the bid from Mistissini. And, if someone from the Swallow family were involved, they would give that first preference.

This has worked in two cases already. Sidney Swallow, in partnership with Keith Kiskinshiish, has created a janitorial and catering company. Emerson Swallow founded Swallow Fournier, a joint venture construction company, with the Fournier construction company of Val-d'Or.

"We have been doing this business for three years now. It was very small at first but now it is beginning to grow. Right now we have about 10 employees," said Sidney Swallow.

Swallow said there will eventually be hundreds working on site at the project.

"This is a sustainable business as we are going to need catering and janitorial services for 20 or 30 or

40 years. We don't even know how long. And, as company we are really good to mine and to process ore but we can't really make doughnuts and so as our core business is mining and milling, as for the rest we need the support of other organizations," said Poirier.

While there are currently about 100 people on site, the 2014 goal is to complete a camp facility for 600 workers before October.

While Swallow-Fournier already participated in the road construction into the mine site,

they are part of the team preparing the camp.

"We are now entering into a new phase, we worked on the road before and now we are building the paddings for the camp. We are just preparing the pads for where the camp site is going to be and we have 50% of that contract," said Emerson Swallow.

Swallow's business partnership was actually formed by his late father but upon his death was handed down to him along with the role of tallyman. Since beginning work with Stornoway last

year, Swallow said that Swallow-Fournier has had over 40 employees and so the employment boom has had an impact on the lives of many in the region.

"The Crees are our priority when it comes to employment. We want to better the employment rates in our community and so far it has really been going good," said Swallow.

And, as the mine is projected to produce 1.5 to 2 million carats of diamonds per year for several decades, the future is not only looking bright, it dazzles.



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Shecapio re-elected Mistissini chief



Mistissini's controversial band council elections came to an end late last month with incumbent Richard Shecapio keeping his position as Chief, scraping by challenger Henry Mianscum in the July 24 run-off election with 52% of the vote. Another run-off election for the position of Deputy Chief ended with a new face joining the council. Gerald Longchap earned 62% of the votes, beating incumbent John S. Matoush for the job. In total, 1496 votes were cast.

Waswanipi elections

Band council elections in Waswanipi will be held August 29. Travel polls are scheduled for August 14 in Amos and Washaw Sibi. They will also be available August 15 in Val-d'Or. The advance poll in Waswanipi will be held August 19.

Polls will be open from 9 am to 7 pm on each of these days.

The candidates are as follows:

CHIEF

Marcel Happyjack
John Kitchen
Steven Blacksmith

DEPUTY CHIEF

Rhonda O. Cooper
Derrick Neeposh
Mandy Gull
Kevin Gunner
Johnny Saganash
Allan J. Happyjack

COUNCILLORS

Allan L. Cooper
Alex Moses
Marcel Martin
John Jolly
Glen Cooper
Marlene I. Kitchen
Paul Dixon
Bianca Albert
Andy Metabie
Michael Grant





A golden experience

Highlights from the North American Indigenous Games

By Amy German

It's been six long years since the flags for the North American Indigenous Games were flying in the wind. But when they were finally run up the flagpoles once again, Quebec's Eastern Door and the North team rose to the occasion.

First Nations youth from all over the province, including a large contingent from Eeyou Istchee, flew to the event in Regina July 20-26 courtesy of the Assembly of First Nations. Thirty-nine Cree youth participated in various track-and-field events as well as basketball and volleyball. In total, the 250 athletes on the EDN team were among 4500 from across North America.

The EDN finished fourth overall out of the 20 teams that competed on behalf of different provinces and states, bringing home 20 gold, 21 silver and 17 bronze medals.

Eeyou Istchee's big winner was 17-year-old Miranda Blacksmith, who won three gold medals for the 1500-metre race, the 3000-metre race and the 6k cross-country races, in which she broke the NAIG

record. Blacksmith also won silver for the 800-metre race, all in the under-19 category.

Looking back at her record-breaking race, Blacksmith said she was just running and was shocked by the result because she wasn't expecting to win.

"I didn't think that I had broken the record. I thought I would come in at around 28 minutes because usually when I run 5 km it takes me 23 minutes. But when I ran the 6 km, it took me only 22 minutes. I was so surprised," recalled Blacksmith.

"I was just running. There was another girl in front of me who I stayed behind. Then at the end there was a big hill and when we hit it I ran but I think she stopped and that is when I sprinted to the finish line."

Blacksmith trained in her hometown of Mistissini with coach Patrice Dominique. But she would never have started running had it not been for her uncle.

"Before I was into sports I was always out drinking with my friends. But then my uncle, Alfred Blacksmith, started encouraging me to try sports. He was the first person I went out running with and I

“BEFORE I WAS INTO SPORTS I WAS ALWAYS OUT DRINKING WITH MY FRIENDS. BUT THEN MY UNCLE, ALFRED BLACKSMITH, STARTED ENCOURAGING ME TO TRY SPORTS. HE WAS THE FIRST PERSON I WENT OUT RUNNING WITH AND I WOULD DO THIS EVERY DAY WITH HIM”

MIRANDA BLACKSMITH



would do this every day with him. He's kind of like my dad as I don't have one," said Blacksmith.

"I was doing track first and then I decided to play hockey. I have been doing this for the last three years, but I also play basketball and broomball. I like keeping busy as it keeps me away from alcohol."

Being at NAIG was a great experience as Blacksmith was able to meet First Nations youth from across Canada through pin trading.

Since attending the games, Blacksmith said she is now even more motivated to keep pushing herself and training harder. Though she won't be able to compete in the next NAIG because she will be 20 years old, she definitely would like to coach the next EDN team.

"I want to thank God for giving me this opportunity to make it this far. I am thankful for he was there when I was running in those events," said Blacksmith.



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Her message to the youth of the Cree Nation is to believe in yourself, train hard, stay positive and your dreams can come true.

Also bringing home hardware to Eeyou Istchee were Jamie Lee Blacksmith, who won a bronze medal in the 1000-metre canoe race; and the EDN volleyball team, including Mistissini's Kayleigh Spencer, which won a silver medal.

The male and female basketball teams had their share of wins and losses. Mistissini's 18-year-old Daylon Longchap, whose basketball team had two wins and two losses, said being at NAIG was very exciting but also a bit scary since he had never attended such a large event.

"My favourite experiences were winning those two games against Florida and Nova Scotia because we really played as a team. It was a great experience," said Longchap.

Longchap felt a tremendous amount of pride for his team, particularly during the opening and closing ceremonies, as these were the moments where everyone was together, marching out Olympic-style.

He said everyone on the team was united and cheering together.

"This has encouraged me to be a chaperone because of the way they were on this trip. They did so much for us and without them we couldn't have been there, so I would like to return the favour one day for the youth. I would like to be a coach and hopefully get a team to the next NAIG," said Longchap.

Mistissini's Kenny MacLeod, who participated in the 400-metre, 800-metre and the 8k races, said he enjoyed the games because people were so friendly. Taking part in the ceremonies was also a huge source for pride.

"Getting to walk out onto that football field, it felt like the Olympics," said MacLeod.

According to Mistissini Recreation Director John Gosset, who played a large part in organizing the youth and getting to them to qualify for the games, having these young athletes participate was an important experience, as some had not traveled much before.

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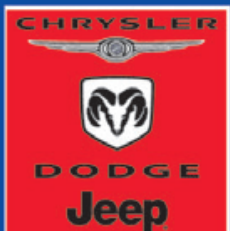


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“Many of them had never played a game against anyone other than Cree teams and so they were nervous and apprehensive. I told them that all teams did the same thing – they put one shoe on at a time, lace it up, warm up and try to figure each other out,” said Gosset.

“You don’t look at a roster in a warm-up and determine that they are better than you just because one guy can dunk. It is a game of invariables.”

Despite the pressure and the nerves, the EDN team fought hard and did remarkably well.

“We were quite good with that (fourth place finish). EDN wore their colours proudly. The big push came in the water as Kahnawake was very strong in the paddling sports and took 39 medals. That got us into the lead in the first few days and that was great,” said Gosset.

“We have six medals from the Cree Nation and so 10% of the total came out of the Cree nation with different circumstances from the south.”



Youth AGA celebrates its 25th anniversary

A large bonfire made of logs is burning brightly on a sandy beach at night. A person in a dark jacket is in the foreground, holding a long stick and looking towards the camera. In the background, other people are visible sitting on the beach near the water. The scene is illuminated by the warm glow of the fire against the dark night sky.





Michael Kawapit



Matthew Natachequan and Saige Mukash



Jean-Paul Murdoch

Written by Amy German Photos by Benjamin Masty

From cost-cutting measures to setting priorities for the Cree Nation Youth Council, this year's AGA was a celebration of what youth can do, according to Youth Grand Chief Joshua Iserhoff.

The 25th Annual General Assembly of the Cree Nation Youth Council took place July 14 in Whapmagoostui. Iserhoff said that because the community is so beautiful, the CNYC took time out from their work to enjoy the community.

"I spent a lot of time outside; it was part of the plan, to take in the beauty of Great Whale. The Youth Council did a wonderful job as they were able to get ATVs for us. They also had a boat for us to go up the river," said Iserhoff.

Many resolutions were passed to lay out the year of work ahead. But Iserhoff said the tone of this year's event was different because they did not bring in special guest speakers from the outside of the Cree world. Instead some Elders spoke and there were presentations made by different members of the Cree Nation.

"We wanted to do something special for the 25th anniversary of the youth AGA and so we called it Nwe' Jinan, Making History," Iserhoff explained. "We wanted it to be about the youth delivering their concerns and sharing their opinions because in the past we would have a lot of presentations."

Going over the many resolutions passed at the event, their first addressed the youth's concerns regarding mining development and the environment. According to Iserhoff, this resolution came out of a talk given to the youth by Elder Thomas Coon.

"He basically said that we have to be careful with our land. They want to ensure that the land is protected and that we also utilize our own consultants instead of outside consultants so this means working with the tallymen and also focusing on coming up with other strategies for economic growth instead of destroying the land," said Iserhoff.

The youth resolved to send representatives to the Annual General Assembly of the Crees in Waswanipi in August to express these environmental concerns to the leadership.

In other CNYC business, it was resolved that the board would elect an interim Deputy Chief in August to replace Kenneth Tanoush, who resigned the position during his term.

One of the more important resolutions adopted at this meeting abolished honorariums to local youth chiefs and coordinators for attending board meetings.

From now on, board members would only be compensated up to \$250, and this only when there has been a loss in wages from their regular job as a result of attending a CNYC board meeting.

"We are abolishing this because we used to get \$250 per day and then \$125 for travel per day and then other fees and so we would be paying out about \$1000 for each member to go to a board of directors meeting per week and so we would end up paying out \$20,000 in board fees alone and this would not include travel, hotels or babysitting fees. So, all told, it would cost about \$40,000 per meeting, twice per year and then there would often be an extra emergency board meeting and so that would be about \$120,000 in board fees for the year," said Iserhoff.

Iserhoff went on to say that as these are youth who could become leaders of their communities they should set an example. The hope is that this move will be echoed in other Cree organizations, including the Cree Nation Government.

The CNYC also resolved to examine incorporating the CNYC through John-Paul Murdoch's law firm, Murdoch Archambault Avocats Inc. According to Iserhoff, were the CNYC to become an independent non-profit organization it would be easier to access fund-

ing from outside sources, especially if they were able to obtain a charitable registration number.

He added that an independent organization would be better positioned to assume an overall role in youth development and support the activities of other stakeholders who have issue-specific programs aimed at youth (such as Cree Health Board, CNG Justice and Corrections, Cree School Board and CHRD).

"We would hope that working together with other stakeholders we could make a meaningful impact for Cree youth in key areas such as learning and career development, leadership, civic responsibility, health and wellness and tonnes more," said Iserhoff.

There were also a number of community programs and initiatives that the CNYC resolved to support. One of these was the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay's new Iiyuu Ahtaawin Miyupimatisiun Planning (IAMP).

After a presentation made at the AGA by Sol Awashish and Darlene Shecapio about IAMP, the youth resolved that they would like to support their mandate in their Cree community tours on social/health priorities within Eeyou Istchee.

The CNYC members also mandated funding to create an annual gathering between the Cree youth and the



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Thomas Coon



Shawn Iserhoff and Joey Blacksmith

First Nations neighbouring Eeyou Istchee. This gathering would take place in a different community every year.

In keeping with the times, a resolution was passed to ensure that future AGAs be broadcast either over the Internet or radio in years to come. While a livestream was not feasible for the Whapmagoostui meeting, Iserhoff said that this should be happening for the 2015 meeting.

The final resolution was passed to support collaboration between the Cree Wilderness Committee and the Justice Department of the Cree Nation Government for youth in need of treatment and healing.

“We said that it would be to create a partnership with them and so while we can’t interfere with the judicial system, what we can do is offer them access to the cabins that the CNYC build on Abel Joly’s camp ground and so we would like to offer this to the Justice Department so that they can utilize them,” said Iserhoff.

Iserhoff said that as Youth Grand Chief, he recommended that members attend their local council meetings, especially to make education a priority.

“I believe in youth leadership. However, I believe that in order to lead one must have knowledge and wisdom to lead. This ‘learning on the job’ has to be addressed locally and regionally,” said Iserhoff.



Mariah George, Darius Mamianskum, and Adam Mast-Shem



Michael Neeposh and Andrew Neeposh

A life-changing experience

Wemindji youth help build a school in Nicaragua

By Amy German



With the simple goal of helping where they can while learning about the world, 15 Cree youth aged 14 to 18 and five chaperones traveled to Nicaragua for the trip of a lifetime in July through Free the Children's "Me to We" program.

According to Brandi Taylor, a teacher at Wemindji's Maquatua Eeyou School, this wasn't a typical trip to an exotic location in the tropics.

"I had the idea that it would be good for them to go and see another part of the world. But this wasn't simply a vacation. I wanted them to be in a community, work with locals and see the impact that they can have by doing something that has a global impact. The goals were life experi-

Hiking the Masaya Volcano National Park. (from front) Brittany Visitor, Amanda Wadden, Chelsea Moses-Blacknied, Amber-Lane Gull, Breena Georgekish, Mike Mark, Jeremy Matches.

ence, global action and global education,” said Taylor.

Having volunteered in a Mexican community at the age of 19, Taylor was hoping these Wemindji youth could have a similar experience. She discovered that Free the Children’s Me to We program offered such an opportunity and, since many youth in the Cree communities had attended Free the Children’s We Day, it seemed a perfect fit.

According to Jessica Wilson, a Programming Manager at the Free The Children’s Montreal office, Me to We is the social enterprise that organizes trips to the group’s Adopt A Village locations.

“Adopt A Village is Free The Children’s holistic and sustainable development model that works to break the cycle of poverty by providing access to five key pillars: Education, Clean Water and Sanitation, Health, Agriculture and Food Security and Alternative Income and Livelihood to all the communities we partner with. It is the goal of a Me to We Trip to have the visitors experience firsthand what it is like in a given community,” said Wilson.

Several months of fundraising were necessary to pay for the trip, including a number of sponsorships from local businesses and the Cree Nation of Wemindji. While this was not a school trip but a community trip, the students did bake sales, take outs, penny socials and letter writing to acquire the necessary funding.

The students raised \$90,000 and in turn got to go on the trip of a lifetime. The youth also participated in leadership training to prepare them for their trip abroad and

the kind of work that they would be doing.

On July 7, the group flew to the Nicaraguan capital of Managua for 10 days of charity work and several cultural excursions and exchanges. While there, they stayed at a local guesthouse and commuted about an hour daily along dirt roads to a site where they worked as part of a local construction crew on an Adopt a Village project.

“We worked in El Trapiche, where they now have an elementary school, preschool and water project. The group from Wemindji helped to build a garden behind the preschool so that the students would have nutritious snacks while at school. They also painted a

The Cree youth were also welcomed by the youth of the community who would be using the school to find out more about their lives. They held an opening ceremony for their activities and said their farewells during a closing ceremony.

“Those students got up and spoke with a translator. These were very young kids – one was in Grade 4 and one was in Grade 1. A couple of the parents also welcomed us to the community. Then there was a closing ceremony where the kids and the parents came back and showed us some traditional dancing and thanked us,” said Taylor.



Excited to travel to Nicaragua! Alyssia Georgekish, Brittany Visitor, Selena Blackned.

brand-new welcome sign for the school, and mixed and poured concrete for the shed that will be built next to a soon-to-be playground,” said Wilson.

The Crees also got to share stories about their home and culture. At one point the Nicaraguan children asked the Crees to get up and perform the Canadian national anthem.

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Not everything was so formal as all of the youth played games together, enjoying soccer as well as hand games that didn't require a translator.

After the long work days, Wilson said she would get together with the Cree kids to do leadership activities as well as talk about the day's experiences. As one of the focuses with the program is leadership, they would discuss how these they could become leaders within their own communities through their experiences.

And, according to Wilson, the tremendous efforts that these Cree kids made did not go unnoticed.

"Wemindji Rocks Nicaragua group was one of the most motivated and hard-working groups I have ever had the privilege to work with," Wilson said. "Since many of them had never experienced anything like this, each and



Covered in dirt while working at El Trapiche Community. Selena Blackned, Carmen Plank, Taryn Shashaweskum.

every day was a new adventure. They did not take anything for granted. I know how hard they worked to get to this point, and to see them appreciate every single moment was extremely moving."

Wilson added she'd probably never laughed so hard as she did

with this group and was warmed by the effort they made to interact with the children of El Trapiche. The kids did a great job of managing to communicate through games and other non-verbal means like laughs, smiles and high fives.

Among her favourite moments was when the kids were asked to make action plans for how they would bring change to Wemindji.

"Their ideas were incredible and I don't have any doubt that these students will continue on with their action plans, and make a huge difference in the community," she said. "Although I only spent 10 days with the Wemindji students, the change in them was incredible. They were more confident, open, trusting and communicative. I saw leaders in every single one of them. It was moving to see their growth from my perspective, and finally to hear it from their amazing educators and



The Nicaragua crew at the top of the Masaya Volcano in Managua, Nicaragua. Chelsea Moses-Blackned, Brandi Taylor, Austin Georgekish, Amber-Lane Gull, Amanda Wadden, Jaime Matoush, Breana Georgekish, Shauna Simpson, Mike Mark, Neebin Atsynia, Jeremy Matches, Selena Blackned, Cheryl Danyluk, Cody Mark, Tristan Dearhouse, Alyssia Georgekish, Brittanya Visitor, Carmen Plank



Group picture at the fountain in the middle of the Cathedral in colonial Grenada. Chelsea Moses-Blackned, Brandi Taylor, Austin Georgekish, Amber-Lane Gull, Amanda Wadden, Jaime Matoush, Breena Georgekish, Shauna Simpson, Mike Mark, Neebin Atsynia, Jeremy Matches, Selena Blackned, Cheryl Danyluk, Cody Mark, Tristan Dearhouse, Alyssia Georgekish, Brittany Visitor, Carmen Plank, Taryn Shashaweskum, Joel Brooks

group leaders who worked so hard to make this happen.”

While in Nicaragua, the youth took in various cultural activities that included a day in Granada learning about the history of Nicaragua and colonialism.

Taylor said the teens were taken to a special café entirely operated by deaf people and learned some sign language through cards provided to them in the café. They also learned how to make hammocks, something several of them purchased to take home.

They visited an active volcano and learned pottery from the local Natives. They had a cultural exchange with these people that entailed watching traditional dance and learning how the Natives preserve their culture.

In all, Taylor said she witnessed a tremendous transformation in many of the youth.

“One girl talked about how the trip made her grateful for what she has and to be grateful for the food that her parents provide and maybe not to complain quite so much,” she commented. “A few of

them were very cognizant of the differences between life in Wemindji and life in El Trapiche. They talked about the size of houses as their homes are large while the Nicaraguan’s are small and they have to grow their own food.”

Taylor noted that spending time without any electronic media also had a big impact.

As the kids had to hand in their phones and other devices prior to leaving, Taylor said she couldn’t believe how much the kids read while they were away. It was grat-

ifying for her as she was the English teacher for many students and observed they didn't read that much when in school.

"There was a lot of reading and a lot of discussion which was new for a lot of them. They were not texting; instead they were having conversations. A few of them said it was neat that they were having conversations with people and not looking at their phones, that was a new experience for some of them. We saw many of them come out of their shells and when we did our banquet when we got home, four or five of them actually got up and spoke at their own request," said Taylor.

Taryn Shashaweskum, 18, said it was great to see another country and help others.

"My favourite memory was helping the community of El Trapiche and working with others. Even though we didn't speak the same language, it was a really good experience to be able to help them build," said Shashaweskum.

Tristan Dearhouse was very impressed by the children he met in Nicaragua.

"I liked how we helped out the village. We built stuff and met a lot of children there. It was really touching because they have so little and yet they are so happy," said Dearhouse.

Chelsea Moses-Blackned said the trip changed her because she now wants to travel the world.

"I feel like we accomplished something. I liked the mountains and the volcanoes and the scenery. It is very beautiful there," said Moses-Blackned.



The group made a Thank You card for the students attending El Trapiche. The Wemindji youth showed Wemindji on a map and explained our journey to Nicaragua to parents and students of El Trapiche Community. Brandi Taylor, Cheryl Danyluk, Austin Georgekish



On the last day, our youth combined their brain power to write a "Thank You" note to the Me to We facilitators in Cree. Alyssia Georgekish, Brittany Visitor, Breena Georgekish

Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee

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Suicide prevention was one of the major themes covered in workshops during the eighth annual Wabun Youth Gathering held from July 14 to 25 at the Eco Lodge in Elk Lake Ontario. Pictured are the Wabun Youth Senior participants who took part in the event.

Strengthening the young

The annual Wabun Youth Gathering changes lives

By Xavier Kataquapit

Jean Lemieux and Mike Archer of Wabun Tribal Council Health Services took the healing dream of the late Elder Thomas Saunders and made it a reality with the creation of the annual Wabun Youth Gathering.

"It was always my goal to create a First Nation youth gathering and when I joined Wabun I was happy to find that this idea was something that gelled well with the wishes of prominent Brunswick House Elder Thomas Saunders and Wabun's Health Director Jean Lemieux," explained Archer, who heads up the gathering and works as the Wabun Health Community Crisis Coordinator.

Jason Saunders, a traditional drummer and singer from Brunswick House First Nation, was on hand to assist facilitators Clayton Small and Craig Fox during the two-week youth gathering.

"It makes me feel so proud to be part of the Wabun Youth Gathering and to serve in the memory

of my great uncle Thomas Saunders," commented Saunders

This year the annual gathering celebrated its eighth year in the wilderness setting at the Eco Centre Lodge in Elk Lake, Ontario. Dozens of Wabun youth attended the event (July 14-25), which was sponsored by Wabun Tribal Council Health Services.

The event was divided into two parts. The first week (July 14-18) was held for junior youth aged from eight to 12 and the second week (July 21-25) was for senior youth aged 13 to 18. The first week of events featured facilitators Craig Fox of Wikwemikong First Nation, a traditional teacher and dancer who instructed the male and female youth on drumming and singing.

The senior week featured a series of workshops by Small, a northern Cheyenne Native American based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and an Aboriginal leadership specialist who promotes pri-

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The Cree Nation of Waswanipi and Chief Paul Gull would like to congratulate the team of Chief Richard Shecapio and Deputy Chief Gerald Longchap on their election win in the Cree Nation of Mistissini.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Société de développement de la Baie-James

Registration on the Société de développement de la Baie-James (SDBJ) Supplier File

Within the framework of its call for tenders process by general invitation, the SDBJ invites contractors interested in becoming a part of its supplier file to present their candidacy for certain auxiliary services of which the estimated cost is equal or superior to \$100,000 but lower than \$1,000,000. The five-year supplier file will be valid until 2016.

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To obtain the registration form:

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chantal.brassard@sdbj.gouv.qc.ca
www.sdbj.gouv.qc.ca

Cost of registration on the supplier file:
Non-refundable \$50 payment (including taxes).

For information: Ms. Chantal Brassard at
819 739-4717, extension 1264.

Registration period: Any time.

Québec 

mary suicide intervention techniques. Small also holds a Masters in Education and has many years experience as a secondary-school principal.

Wabun youth experienced role playing in skits and exercises conducted by Small that assisted them in terms of dealing with themes centred around suicide prevention, grief, forgiveness and critical issues facing First Nation teens.

"I have been coming to this gathering for years now and I am really thankful that people like Mike Archer and Clayton Small can provide us with teaching and hands on information that helps us deal with things like suicide, teen pregnancy and bullying," commented 16-year-old Jason Therriault of Mattagami First Nation.

Julie McKay, Assistant Wabun Health Director, presented the junior youth with gifts and certificates in appreciation of their participation.

"I am so proud of our Wabun youth I met during my visit to our gathering and I am convinced that we are doing a great job in helping our young people develop through traditional teachings. Many thanks to Jean Lemieux, Mike Archer and our Wabun chiefs for making our circle strong," said McKay.

The featured drum-and-singing group came from a Wabun community. The Big Bear Claw Singers of Brunswick House First Nation, led by Jason Saunders, performed traditional songs with the guidance and teachings of Fox.

Morris Naveau, an Elder and a residential school survivor from Mattagami First Nation, was on hand to lead the groups in prayer and assist with teachings.



Elder Maurice Naveau has been instrumental in assisting Wabun Health staff and facilitators with traditional and cultural teachings during many years of the Wabun Youth Gathering. L-R are: Elder Naveau, Mike Archer (Wabun Health), Jason Therriault (Mattagami First Nation Youth) and Clayton Small (facilitator).

"It makes me feel so good to see all these young Wabun people going on this healing journey through our annual gathering. What they are learning here will help guide them in the future and prepare them for leadership roles," said Naveau.

Wabun Tribal Council is a regional territorial organization that represents the six First Nation communities of Beaverhouse, Brunswick House, Chappleau Ojibwe, Flying Post, Matachewan and Mattagami in northeastern Ontario.



Wabun Youth from the First Nation communities of Beaverhouse, Brunswick House, Matachewan and Mattagami came together for their Annual Youth Gathering. Pictured are the junior youth group who took part in the event.

JUSTICE FOR MISSING
AND MURDERED
INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Ó-nen íeíóhé áontakowatirihwáíé-ritshé né
kónnólk-wéhón-wé né íah nóp-wén-ton
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Justice pour
les FEMMES
autochtones
disparues et
assassinées



The writing's on the wall

A large mural in Montreal commemorates
Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women

By Jesse Staniforth

Beneath the indigo twilight sky, a shawl-covered woman whose head is ringed with stars and circling hawks holds a candle in her hands, its warm light glowing up to her face. Above her, in huge letters, the words "JUSTICE for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women."

Montreal's Missing Justice commissioned the mural, which takes up the entire side of a three-storey building on that city's main drag, Boulevard St-Laurent. Artists Fanny Aisha, Guko and Monk-E, Missing Justice completed the mural July 18, when it was revealed to the public with an evening of celebration.

"We've talked for probably three or four years about how it would be great to have some artwork around this issue in the city, just to have a presence," said Missing Justice member Monica Van Schaik. "The whole idea about Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women is that women are going missing, so they're not here anymore. We thought it would be very powerful to put something in place so that they do have a presence, they do have a place within the city."

Artist Guko says that he initially entered the project simply because organizer Fanny Aisha was his friend, but that once he was on board he began to understand its importance.

"[Aisha] had the goal of making a mural, and invited me to participate," said Guko. "I found it was a good collaboration, so I worked with Monk-E to make the mural. Before starting the mural, I met with Missing Justice and Sisters in Spirit. It really inspired me to search. A mural is a good way to reach people with an important message."

The image of the woman in the mural is taken from a photo of Kahnawake's Kahawinontie (Cheryl Diabo), a member of the Bear Clan, who was photographed during an ear-

lier march in support of Missing and Murdered Women. Kahawinontie was on hand for the event.

"I'm really glad they caught me at that moment, because it's really a strong message," she said. "To me it represents the sadness of loss, but at the same time there's hope in the light that's there in the hands. It shows that she's not letting go of that [hope], and it's a really strong message. I didn't realize I was projecting that when I was there, so I'm really happy to be able to contribute, even though I did it indirectly."

For Kahawinontie, her participation both in the march where she

"The whole thing has been silent too long. People weren't listening. With our people, we don't tend to go and make a big thing about it. We deal with it among ourselves."

was photographed, and her presence at the unveiling, had to do with the basic principles of Kanien'keha:ka/Mohawk society in which she was raised.

"In our society," she said, "everybody is born with a responsibility to each other. Everybody has that respect for one another, and we're all supposed to strive to seek out justice. I was raised that way. That's what led me here to Missing Justice."

Many other speakers, musicians, and Kahnawake's impressive mother-daughter hoop dancing pair Barbara and Emily Diabo, were on hand for the evening. The speakers included Kitigan Zibi's Bridget Tolley,

who pioneered the movement seeking justice for Missing and Murdered Women after her mother, Gladys Tolley, was killed by a police car in 2001. Tolley expressed enthusiastic support for the mural.

"When Bridget Tolley joins us, it's always like this spirit and this energy is here," Van Schaik said. "It's such a blessing to have her here, because she's just so powerful and passionate. It definitely made me happy to have been part of this project, and to have someone like Bridget coming and seeing it, and feeling so empowered by it. Because that's the idea."

While the focus is often on BC's infamous Highway of Tears, Van Schaik emphasized that cases like Tolley's remind us that there are also Quebec women who have also gone missing and been murdered.

"When Tiffany Morrison passed away, we realized this issue was here as well, in Montreal, and in Quebec, but there wasn't very much action or awareness about it," she said. "So Missing Justice started from there – that was our inspiration, to start to build awareness that this issue is happening here as well as in the west."

Kahnawake Elder John Cree is a familiar face at the vigils and marches for Missing and Murdered Women in Montreal. As on many previous occasions, he gave the opening and closing blessings for the evening of the mural's unveiling, both in English and in Kanien'keha/Mohawk.

Speaking afterward, he said, "The whole thing has been silent too long. People weren't listening. With our people, we don't tend to go and make a big thing about it. We deal with it among ourselves. But there comes a point where you have to go out and join forces. And we have to fight like hell."

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE



Board of Compensation & Creeco Inc

Position: **RECEPTIONIST/OFFICE AGENT
(Replacement)**

Location: Ouje-Bougoumou

Period: Starting August 2014 for a period of twelve (12) months

The Board of Compensation and the Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company (CREECO) Inc. are currently seeking an experienced individual for the position of Receptionist/Office Agent. Under the supervision of the Office Manager, the Receptionist/Office Agent is responsible for receiving and dispatching all communications as well as performing clerical, secretarial and technical functions.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES INCLUDE:

- Greet visitors, ascertain the nature of their visit and directs them to the appropriate persons;
- Answers the telephone and conveys messages to the appropriate parties;
- Maintains a directory of telephone & fax numbers, persons, companies, communities, etc.;
- Performs routine clerical duties such as copying and scanning materials required for meetings;
- Receives and forwards fax and email messages;
- Responsible for outgoing, incoming mail and stamps;
- Files, scans correspondence and other material related to the Board of Compensation;
- Assists the Office Manager maintain inventory of supplies required for the proper functioning of the office and meetings;
- Will be required to enter computer data from time to time;
- Provides secretarial support to other staff members;
- Responds to inquiries of a general nature;
- Performs any other related tasks.

GENERAL CONDITIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- The successful candidate should have a Cegep diploma in the related field of business, however, an educational shortfall could be substituted with pertinent experience;
- Good organizational and communication skills;
- Excellent written English language skills;
- English, Cree and French would be an asset;
- To be autonomous and ability to work in a team;
- Experience with computers, knowledge of software such as Microsoft office.

Remuneration for the above position shall commensurate with qualifications and experience. Qualified Cree beneficiaries will be given preference.

Position: **BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT LIAISON**

Location of Work:

Ouje-Bougoumou

NATURE OF WORK

The Business Development Liaison is responsible for analyzing business documents and reviewing potential projects for consideration by CREECO. The incumbent also performs administrative duties, including writing reports, and developing the communications strategy for CREECO. Under the authority of the President of CREECO and direct supervision of the Controller and/or Chief Accountant.

THE BUSINESS ANALYSIS SHALL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Collaborate in business development related activities within CREECO;
- Analysis on the viability of business proposals from proponents;
- Comment on the alignment of strategic plans;
- Upon invitation, participate at the annual planning sessions;
- Upon request, assist the CREECO subsidiaries in business analysis;
- Collaborate and present to the Business Development Committee on the outcome of business analysis; and
- Upon request, present to the Board of Directors any recommendations being proposed.

THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY SHALL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Communicate accurate and up-to-date information of CREECO and subsidiaries;
- Maintain and update the corporate website, Facebook, and Twitter accounts;
- Develop newsletters and pamphlets;
- Develop and deliver a professional corporate message at various presentations;

- Compile human resources statistics;
- Develop and compile information about career opportunities;
- Develop recruitment strategies/initiatives to be presented in the communities or upon invitation;
- Upon request, collaborate with each subsidiary on communication;
- Coordinate business events or conferences; and
- Participate at career/job fairs.

GENERAL CONDITIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- The successful candidate must have a University Degree or Cegep diploma in the related field of business, however, an educational shortfall could be substituted with pertinent experience;
- Position is open to all with a preference to Cree beneficiaries;
- Must have an ability to work in a team and independently;
- Must have experience/knowledge in analysis of business proposals;
- Good organizational skills;
- Strong interpersonal and leadership skills;
- Willing to travel as it will be required;
- Use of computers and software such as Microsoft office;
- Excellent written and spoken English language skills;
- Knowledge of Cree and/or French would be an asset; and
- Must be willing to take training as required. Remuneration for the above position shall commensurate with qualifications and experience. CREECO offers a competitive salary, an excellent benefit package that includes: group insurance, pension plan, special allowance and also paid home leaves and subsidized housing according to specific policies.

For both these positions, please forward application with resume on or before **August 15, 2014 at 1:00 p.m.** to:

Darlene Cheechoo, Chairperson/President, Board of Compensation/CREECO
203 Opemiska Meskino, Box 1166, Ouje-Bougoumou (QC) G0W 3C0
Or via email at chairperson@boc-creeco.ca

“In the past we have tried to do all sorts of things like telling people to eat five fruits and vegetables a day or to walk for 30 minutes, but it is not working,.It will never work and so now we need a new approach and we need to change the way we think.”

Walking a message to the AGA

Sol Awashish is on a mission to promote Miyupimaatisiin

By Amy German

Sol Awashish is keeping up a tradition of a walk to promote a health message at the Annual General Assembly of the Crees.

This year, the program officer at the Cree Health Board will begin walking from Chapais to Waswanipi August 2 to deliver a message about Miyupimaatisiin, a grassroots plan to engage the Cree public to find solutions to chronic health problems such as diabetes.

“Every year we try to have a new theme, last year it was on family violence, another year it was on alcohol and drugs,” said Awashish.

The Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB) plan is to go directly to the people to identify the needs of

each community and how to address those needs.

Once these needs are identified, Awashish said each community should develop its own action plan by hosting consensus meetings with local organizations.

“In the past we have tried to do all sorts of things like telling people to eat five fruits and vegetables a day or to walk for 30 minutes, but it is not working,” said Awashish. “It will never work and so now we need a new approach and we need to change the way we think.”

Awashish said each community’s leadership must take ownership of the process. Health and social services are often discussed at local and regional assemblies, but they remain issues on paper

that get filed away until the next AGA.

According to Awashish, the goal is to target preventable chronic diseases through healthy eating, reducing stress and exercise.

Obesity looms large in this issue because it is one of the biggest triggers for chronic health issues.

“When we look at the statistics, 80% of the adult Cree population is overweight, that is a very big risk factor right there,” said Awashish.

“If we are just going to talk about it or throw money at these things, that does not do our population any good. What we need to do is set up something where people can decide what programs they want. This has to come from the people.”



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Wabun Youth Gathering: A template for success

by Xavier Kataquapit

Suicide is a major problem in First Nations right across the country. As a First Nation person, I have been touched by suicide in the loss of friends from my community in Attawapiskat. Too many wonderful young Native people who are full of potential are taking their lives for no good reason.

In schools, non-Native and Native, we teach young people about mathematics, history, geography, language and science but to a great degree, educators don't provide a lot of skills related to dealing with suicide, abuse, violence, sexuality, teen pregnancy and addictions.

The difference between a young First Nation person getting through those difficult teen years or not has to do with education. If youth are taught the necessary skills in which to identify problem areas that relate to critical issues like suicide than they have more of a chance of rising to their potential. It can mean the difference between life and death.

As a participant in the annual Wabun Youth Gathering hosted and developed by the Wabun Health Services of Wabun Tribal Council, I can tell you that there are many young people getting the information they need to better deal with big issues like suicide. For years now I have been watching young Wabun First Nation members learn about their Native traditions and culture in all types of workshops and sessions. I have seen them graduate from preteen juniors to teenage seniors and many have developed to become chaperones in leadership roles.

Gatherings like this don't simply just happen. They are the result of the initiative of people who realize that something must be done to help our First Nation youth and are willing to do the

work to make things happen. The Wabun Chiefs, Wabun Executive Director Shawn Batise, Wabun Health Director Jean Lemieux and Regional Crisis Team Coordinator Mike Archer deserve a resounding thanks on behalf of their youth for producing the annual event that has been running for eight years now. For more information: www.wabunyouthgathering.com

This type of gathering – where the focus is on skills development in terms of dealing with all of those big issues like suicide, addictions, violence and abuse – is making a difference. When you bring youth together for a week of learning and skills development with an emphasis on traditions and culture and in a safe and quiet place only good things can happen. I have seen shy withdrawn First Nation children change before my eyes over the eight years I have attended the youth gathering. They now feel good about themselves, they have a better understanding of who they are and they have some very important skills to draw from.

Some graduates who come to mind are Jaimee Roy (Matachewan First Nation) and Sam Kloetstra (Mattagami First Nation) who have moved on to take leadership roles in education and social work. Tianna McKay-Golinowski (Mattagami First Nation) was on hand this year as an adult chaperone as she prepares for a career in health care.

I have seen these young people discover their traditions and culture in powwows, the drum, singing, dance and arts over the years. In addition I have seen them come together in groups under the guidance of renown healing facilitators like Clayton Small and Maria Treviso. Clayton runs a program to assist Aboriginal youth known

as Native Pride, which you can read about at: www.nativeprideus.org

Through these sessions the Wabun youth learned so much about how to deal with all those major issues that teens face. Strong friendships are forged during these annual gatherings and much of what these young people learn they bring back to their families and friends in their First Nations. That means that change happens. This change is slow and gradual but it is apparent. And even if it means that just one child has been saved from suicide, early pregnancy or some sort of abuse then all the work done to make the Wabun Youth Gathering a reality has been a success.

I encourage First Nation and non-Native communities, educators and organizations to consider developing similar gatherings where our young people can learn the skills they need to really make a difference in their lives. With the right skills in their pockets these youth can all rise to their potential.



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